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LETTER DATED 10 AUGUST 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of a note addressed to the delegation sent to Kinshasa by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to conduct a fact-finding mission on the armed conflict between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Rwandan-Ugandan coalition.

I should be grateful if you would have this note circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) André Mwamba KAPANGA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex

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I. BACKGROUND

1. On the eve of the accession to power of the Democratic Alliance for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL), Mobutu's Zaire was characterized by:
 - State bankruptcy, institutionalized depredation and widespread corruption;
 - The erosion of the economic base, which was aggravated by the looting episodes of 1991 and 1993;
 - Generalized insecurity and public terror orchestrated by an army bent on destroying civil peace;
 - The steady deterioration of the population's standard of living, which was accentuated by the resurgence of epidemics and high infant mortality;
 - Deliberate reduction of young people's school enrolment with a view to spreading ignorance, which was considered the foundation for the continuance of the established order.
2. The influx of Rwandan Hutu refugees into the country's eastern provinces following the rise to power of the Tutsis in Kigali further exacerbated the problem of security along the Congolese-Rwandan border.
3. It was in this context that AFDL was established for the purpose of ending the Mobutu dictatorship, whose responsibility for the impoverishment of the Congolese people had been recognized.
4. Formed by the political forces hostile to Mobutu, but lacking the resources needed for the achievement of its objective, AFDL accepted military and logistical assistance from friendly countries, including Rwanda and Uganda.
5. These two countries stood to gain by this assistance, insofar as the war of liberation envisaged by AFDL would remove from their borders the sources of tension that were jeopardizing their security.
6. Fifteen months after AFDL took power, the Congolese Government, considering that order and security had been restored within its borders, decided to end the Rwandan military presence within the Congolese armed forces.

7. This decision by the Congolese Government, which Kigali nonetheless claims to have supported, constituted, for the Ugandan-Rwandan coalition, the spark that touched off the armed conflict with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

II. THE FACTS

8. The repatriation of Rwandan soldiers had barely been completed when the Democratic Republic of the Congo became the victim of acts of aggression perpetrated by Rwanda and its allies.

9. Military convoys consisting of many Rwandan army trucks full of heavily armed soldiers violated the Congolese borders to surround the towns of Goma and Bukavu on 2 and 3 August 1998.

10. As these events were unfolding in the eastern part of the country, in Kinshasa a group of Rwandan soldiers who had eluded the repatriation operation stormed the Tshiatshi and Kokolo camps.

11. In Kisangani, again during the night of Sunday, 2 August and Monday, 3 August 1998, another group of Rwandan soldiers, who were awaiting repatriation, opened fire on the Kisangani garrison.

12. To complete this tragic picture, three Boeing aircraft operated by private Congolese companies - Congo Airlines, LAC and Blue Airlines - were hijacked on their departure from Goma on Tuesday, 4 August 1998 by James Kaberede, a Rwandan who, until July 1998, had assumed the functions of Chief of Staff a.i. of the Congolese Armed Forces. The aircraft landed in Kitona, where between 600 and 800 Rwandans disembarked. Their goal is to:

(a) Try to win the support of the Congolese troops at that base;

(b) Strangle Kinshasa by seizing areas such as the port of Matadi, which is vitally important for the capital;

(c) Surround the Inga hydroelectric dam, which provides electric power to Kinshasa and to the mining operations in Katanga, as well as to a number of other countries in southern and central Africa.

13. This past Sunday, 9 August 1998, two armed columns consisting of tanks, armoured cars and trucks full of soldiers proceeded from Uganda towards the town of Bunia.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

14. It is clear that the aggression being perpetrated against the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the work of the Rwandan-Ugandan coalition.

15. What is being presented as a Banyamulenge insurrection is nothing more nor less than a crude disguise to mask the destabilizing manoeuvres of Mr. Museveni

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and Mr. Kagame, whose expansionist ambitions with regard to our territory no longer need to be demonstrated.

16. We can affirm that the Banyamulenge, a Congolese tribe which is a small minority numbering fewer than 50,000 people, do not have the human resources, much less the financial means, to raise an army capable of setting the entire Congolese territory ablaze.

17. Rwanda and Uganda have incurred full international responsibility for this conflict in that they are acting in violation of the relevant provisions of the Charters of the United Nations and of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), both of which recognize the inviolability of every State's borders and political independence.

IV. POSITION OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

18. We request the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to use their respective prerogatives to demand that Rwanda and Uganda withdraw their troops immediately.

19. The Democratic Republic of the Congo does not wish to make war with any State. It is merely defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Consequently, should the aggressors fail to withdraw their troops, the Democratic Republic of the Congo vows to use every means at its disposal to end this aggression.

20. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo reiterates its willingness to guarantee fully its responsibility towards all foreigners, be they Rwandans or Ugandans, who have chosen to live on Congolese soil. The sweep operations under way in certain Congolese towns are being conducted for the sole purpose of neutralizing the web of complicity which the aggressors have woven within the country.

21. The head of State, His Excellency Mr. Laurent-Désiré Kabila, as well as the Government of National Security, have repeatedly expressed their determination to take firm and resolute action to bring the current democratization process to fruition. Our wish is that the current crisis be brought promptly to an end so that it will not disturb the normal conduct of this process.

V. WHAT THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO EXPECTS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

- That an investigation be opened in the necessary conditions of objectivity and independence;
- That Rwanda and Uganda be condemned, in accordance with the provisions of the Charters of the United Nations and of OAU;

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- That the United Nations and OAU use every means at their disposal to demand the withdrawal of Ugandan-Rwandan troops from Congolese territory.

(Signed) David M'BWANKIEM
Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs
